

Exodus 20: 1-4 – The Ten Commandments, part 2: “Do not make any carved image or likeness.”¹



Main point: Don't try to make God conform to your image, to be who *you* want God to be. Follow and love God as God is.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: Moses and the people of Israel have just escaped from hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt. *How did they escape? What miracle did God do to get them out and over the Red Sea?*

God parted the Red Sea! And when the Egyptians tried to follow to get their Hebrew slaves back, the seas fled back in and the Egyptians were destroyed. Amazing show of God's power and provision for his people.

- Last week: The first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other God before me.” God says: You're my number one, because I saved you and made you my special people. Therefore, make ME number one for you.

Study: Exodus 20: 4

⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ...”

1. *v. 4: So, let's look a little more. What is the second commandment? How would you say that in your own words?*
 - a. “You shall not make any images of idols and worship them.”
 - b. *Is this different from the first commandment? What does God want for the people to focus on? Him and only him*
2. *I wonder if anyone here ever have an imaginary friend, when you were little? Very common for little kids to create imaginary friends ...*
 - a. My son Sam's imaginary friends: Pluck and Juk and Muk and Kuk ☺
3. *Why do kids create imaging friends? What's nice about an imaginary friend? Who gets to decide exactly what that friend is like?*
 - a. They can be exactly who you want them to be – you get to define who they are!
4. *Let's look at the second command again: What happens when a person creates a physical idol? Start with the basics: What kind of physical stuff could you use to make an idol of some kind?*
 - a. Gold, wood, stone, cloth, clay....
5. *What kind of shape could you choose for an idol?*
 - a. Man, woman, calf, tree, elephant, pyramid, obelisk ... anything!
6. *What kind of purpose could you make that idol have? What might you want your little idol to do?*
 - a. Bring rain, fertility, power, wealth ...
7. *So, in all of the cases where a person makes an idol, who is DEFINING what that “god” is?*
 - a. The person who created it! Chooses all of its characteristics, like an imaginary friend.

¹ Some material gratefully borrowed from Fellowship Monrovia: <https://madeforfellowship.com/>

8. *Hm, I wonder: Do we ever want to do this with God? Have you ever wanted to define who God is, what God should do or not do?*
9. *If you could change something about God, what would it be?*
 - a. God's timing; knowledge/feeling of his presence; God's purposes for my future; seeing the future; reset button
10. *Why, then, do you think God make this commandment? "Do not make an image of me."*
 - a. We do not get to create a version of God that fits and conforms to OUR image of God.
 - b. We are to TRUST God and build the relationship based on who God reveals himself to be.
 - c. We are made in God's image; we don't get to make God into an image of our own choosing.
11. *How does God reveal who he really is? What should we use to create a true image of God?*
 - a. Scripture; prayer, contemplation; wisdom from godly, humble people

We may want God to change, but God says "Love me for who I am and YOU will change and become more like me."

Summary of The Ten Commandments: A love letter! A call to *love*, not a burden of law. A beautiful invitation to relationship with God and each other.

God says: You're not obeying me because *then* I'll love you; I've loved you first. Your obedience isn't to oblige me to love you back.

- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 19: 1-7: There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

Exodus 20: 1-17: And God spoke all these words, saying,
² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
³ “You shall have no other gods before me.
⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath ...
⁷ “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates....

¹² “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ “You shall not murder.

¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You shall not steal.

¹⁶ “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”